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ABSTRACT

The pressures engendered by the scarce resources of the 1980s demand the development of new organizational designs that respond to local cultural, economic, and social needs. In the Cumberland and Shenandoah Valleys, a four-state region containing 12 postsecondary institutions, a voluntary association of colleges was formed to solve mutual and recurring problems and derive the maximum benefit from scarce funding. Initial meetings among college representatives confirmed the benefits of institutional communication and cooperation and confronted a number of important issues, including the articulation of student transfer among institutions, mutual concerns related to academic advising and educational quality, declining resources for staff development, and the special needs of older, part-time students. From these discussions solutions emerged and were implemented. For example, articulation agreements were developed to remove barriers to student transfer; a seminar on academic advising at Frostburg State College was opened to other association members; members shared information on honors programs as a response to the question of general education quality; an informal agreement was made to include personnel from member colleges in staff development activities; and the viability of residential baccalaureate programs was investigated. Plans for further joint activity exist in the areas of program review and community needs assessment. (HB)

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CROSSING FRONTIERS:
MULTI-COLLEGE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON A SHOESTRING

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Introduction: Dealing with Ambiguity

Thus far, the 1980s have been a field day for gloomsayers. Conferences are held and articles written using terms like decline, decrease, cutback, and erosion. Serious educators prophesy the end of the open door; they propose to wind down the machinery of mass education. Society can no longer afford to educate everyone.

This pattern of thinking and planning is shortsighted. I prefer the scenerio advanced by Benjamin Wygal, President of Florida Junior College at Jacksonville. "Continuity, disruption, and readjustment compose a cyclical, ongoing process." The community college is eminently suited to moderate this cycle by assisting with the process of readjustment. Our challenge is to re-establish continuity in the life of the individual and to improve quality of life.[1] This proposition for coping with change recalls Robert Frost's poem, Hannibal:

> *Was there ever a cause too lost,*
> *Ever a cause that was lost too long,*
> *Or that showed with the lapse of time too vain*
> *For the generous tears of youth and song?* [2]

We can improve quality of life if we remember that our old answers will not fit today's new questions.

The 1980s demand new organizational designs with a focus upon the community college's ability to respond to local cultural, economic, and social needs. Required are dynamic yet balanced educational programs and services which make effective and efficient application of scarce resources. We must be creative in our thinking in an era of limitations. If one concept captures the 1980s, it is ambiguity. And, it is important to remember Freud's assessment that the ability to cope with ambiguity is the hallmark of maturity.

This presentation will describe an organization and a process for using the ambiguity of the 1980s. The underlying assumption is that community colleges are mature enough to convene voluntary associations to solve recurring problems, improve communication, derive maximum benefit from the expenditure of scarce resources, and not become bogged down in the bureaucracy of association. The guiding principle is to meet the client at the point of individual, not institutional, need; we exist to improve the quality of life for our clients.

The Cumberland/Shenandoah Valleys Association: A Frame of Reference

The Cumberland and Shenandoah Valleys form a natural four-state region containing twelve institutions of higher education. The needs of the residents of the region transcend the barriers of state boundaries. While the six community colleges and six four-year institutions have shared students for years, no attempt was made to establish any formal relationship among them until 1980.

The Academic Vice President at Shepherd College, a public four-year institution which is part of the West Virginia state system, invited the chief academic officers from the regional institutions to a meeting on his campus. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the value of an informal association for information exchange, problem solution, and cooperative planning. Eight of the twelve academic officers attended a spring 1980 meeting.

The participants explored two issues. What benefit could be derived from an association? It was agreed that the persons in attendance could do a great deal to improve interinstitutional cooperation and communication. Should the group meet again? The consensus was that benefit could be derived from regularly scheduled meetings. As a result, the association was born.

A second meeting took place on the campus of Hagerstown Junior College (HJC) in November 1981. Each participating academic officer was encouraged to submit items for the agenda. The Dean of Instruction from HJC served as the convener and recorder for the meeting.

The second meeting was attended by representatives from eight institutions. Seven issues comprised the agenda. The disposition of the items will be addressed from the HJC perspective, focusing on the value derived by the college from participation in the association.

The Association: A Formative Assessment

The first item discussed by the academic officers was program articulation. Two Virginia institutions, Lord Fairfax Community College and Shenandoah College, have a series of two plus two program-level agreements already

negotiated. The agreements provide smooth transition from associate to bachelor's degree. Other academic officers described agreements which existed within their institutions.

Following the association meeting, staff from HJC contacted the dean at Shenandoah. The Virginia institution, approximately forty-five miles south of HJC, is interested in transfer students from Maryland. Two of Shenandoah's programs, the bachelor of science in nursing and the bachelor of science in data processing, are attractive to HJC students. HJC staff drafted articulation agreements for these programs following a visit to Shenandoah. The two colleges are in the process of implementing the agreements. By the fall 1982 semester, HJC students will be able to transfer barrier free to these programs at Shenandoah College. Through the medium of the association, HJC is able to provide increased opportunities for clients at minimal cost.

The process of academic advising is becoming increasingly important as more students work, are faced with limited funds for education, and cannot afford several program changes. During the association meeting, one of the Maryland institutions, Frostburg State College (FSC), announced that it was sponsoring a seminar on academic advising techniques. A consultant had been employed from a model program. Since funds were already committed, FSC extended an invitation to the other association members to participate. HJC, Allegany Community College (ACC), and Garrett Community College (GCC) sent teams of faculty and administrators to the seminar.

At HJC, the team of participants sponsored a staff development clinic for interested faculty following the FSC seminar. The college faculty and administration are modifying the existing advising procedures as a result of the seminar and follow-up activity. The cost to HJC for a modified advising program was minimal; the benefit is better service to students.

Increasing concern over the quality of general education and its relationship to excellence has emerged in the 1980s. The association's response was a discussion of honors programs. Lord Fairfax Community College, FSC, and another Maryland four-year college, Mt. St. Mary's, shared the designs of their programs. Frederick Community College (FCC) of Maryland described a

funding strategy for attracting potential honor students. A consensus developed that honors programs have a place in today's two- and four-year colleges.

As a result of association deliberations, HJC has initiated the first course in an honors program. Further, the college's faculty senate has drafted plans for a faculty scholars program funded through faculty contributions. The program is a direct outgrowth of the FCC design. A special segment of HJC's service area will derive benefit from the association's effort.

A common concern among all participating colleges is declining resources for staff development. An informal agreement exists among association members to include personnel from member colleges in staff development activities on their campuses at little or no cost. Since the agreement took effect, faculty from HJC have participated in activities at ACC and Shippensburg State College in Pennsylvania (SSC) for only the cost of transportation and meals. Resource limitations in the 1980s demand that staff development become a cooperative venture. The exchange concept will help faculty and staff stay current while keeping financial outlays manageable.

Community college students are changing. They are older, attending part time, working full time, and bearing greater family responsibilities. While they remain interested in transferring to baccalaureate programs, they are unable to leave home to do so. HJC hosts three residential baccalaureate programs on the college's campus; they were discussed at the association meeting. FSC staff considered the idea worthy of exploration and agreed to meet with HJC personnel to discuss other residential programs. Currently a market analysis to determine the viability of a residential baccalaureate in management is taking place. A survey regarding the potential for a teacher education program is planned. The association has produced better program opportunity for HJC graduates and new markets for FSC programs with limited expenditure of resources.

The colleges which comprise the association represent three regional accrediting associations and four state approval and evaluation agencies.

All participants are concerned about accountability yet cannot devote extensive time and resources to periodic program review procedures. The association meeting scheduled for late April 1982 will focus upon these procedures. It is hoped that a design will emerge for informal consultation regarding program review and assessment. A pool of knowledgeable evaluators available within the association will save both time and money for member colleges.

The recent association meeting was attended by a representative of the community college doctoral program at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI). Dr. Darrel Clowes volunteered university support for topical conferences of interest to association members. As a result of his offer, staff from HJC and FCC will be participating in a community needs analysis conference on the VPI campus in May 1982. The participation of VPI in the association makes available research, evaluation, and development expertise critical to managing the ambiguity of the 1980s. Association members are developing analysis and planning models which can be implemented with the assistance of the university. The result will be more comprehensive, efficient planning and needs analysis: critical tasks for the 1980s.

Conclusion: The Utility of Retrenchment and Re-evaluation

The pressures engendered by scarce resources contain the potential for institutional renewal. During the expansion of the 1970s, quality was secondary as we struggled with quantity. Our current cycle of disruption presents the opportunity to concentrate on appraising and upgrading our programs and services. The greatest challenge, according to Leslie Koltai, Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District, will be to foster new and creative thinking in an era of limitations.[3] An association like the Cumberland/Shenandoah Valleys has a role to play in stimulating creativity.

The opportunity for dialogue, information exchange, and constructive assesment drawing upon the expertise of two- and four-year colleges serving a common region produces the enriched environment necessary to stimulate creativity. The Appalachian region which hosts the Cumberland/Shenandoah Valleys association is fortunate to have such rich diversity available.

However, the model is available to other two- and four-year colleges. For example, the state of New Jersey has formed a consortium composed of seventeen community colleges and three four-year institutions. Their cooperative activities address the same concerns as the Cumberland/Shenandoah association. The voluntary association model emphasizes new designs, strategies, and concepts to manage retrenchment and conduct productive re-evaluation.

George Vaughn, President of Peidmont Virginia Community College, efficiently summarizes the new dimensions of organizational development and renewal. "...individuals involved in the administrative process must be brought together to produce a synergistic effect--assuring that the whole of the administrative process will exceed the total of its parts."[4] When the process is energized by the interaction of several institutions, the outcome is sufficient creativity to realize the potential inherent in the challenge of the 1980s. Perhaps we have reached Freud's stage of maturity.

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